

Theology in Miniature;

O R,

A S K E T C H

O N

PURE RELIGION;

B E I N G

THE SUBSTANCE

O F

TWO SERMONS,

Preached at DARTMOUTH,

AUGUST the 30th, 1795.

by W. WILLEY, Minister of the Word.

*a doctrine shewing uncorruptness, sound speech
that cannot be condemned; that he who is of
the contrary part may be ashamed. Tit. ii. 7, 8.*

P L Y M O U T H :

Printed by P. NETTLETON, No. 57, Market-Street.

Price S I X - P E N C E .

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages, presented to the notice of the public, are purely designed in hope of removing that disagreeable odium, so unjustly reflected on the Baptist Dissenters, in this part of the Kingdom.

As it is supposeable that prejudices of such a kind, must chiefly result from the want of a better information, what is here offered to the notice of the public, on the nature of pure Religion, corresponding with the sentiments of the Holy Bible, is, with earnest prayer for general utility, humbly submitted to the candid Reader, and the blessing of God.



THEOLOGY in MINIATURE.

James i. 27. *Pure religion, and undefiled before
GOD.*

I Need not go far to collect materials, in order to support and vindicate the verity of the Christian religion. Profane history will be but of little avail either to sanction or recommend it. The purity, perfection, and utility of this system is not to be fetched from sage philosophy, nor acquired by the Religion of Nature. The truly all-important, soul-ennobling theme, calculated to instruct, refine, and console the humble enquirer after truth, is contained in that small volume of inspiration, commonly known by the title of *the Holy Bible*. To this all-sufficient testimony, whosoever speaketh not accordingly, in the public exhibition of doctrines, and practical holiness of living, it is because there is no light in them.* Every subject seminated with true Bible principles, has the religion of GOD in miniature: nor need he further proofs of the validity of Christianity, than those felicities which are over the result of its principles. My text contains a summary of the real state of the

* Isa. viii, 20.

new man,† or a creature formed of God.‡—
 Having therefore, such an accomplished model
 before me, it forbids the vanity of accumulating
 the useless heap of superfluities, in considering
 the numerous sectaries, titles, and modes, by
 which Religion is distinguished among men.—
 The most effectual method, I apprehend, to ne-
 gative superficial characters, and unimportant
 forms, whereby (sacrilegiously) the epithet of
 Religion is appropriated, is immediately to in-
 sist on the sacred furniture with which my text
 is freighted. In the prosecution of this subject,
 it will be necessary in the first place to consider
 Religion.

- 1st. As to its author, nature, and propriety.
- 2d. The necessity of special revelation, for
 the benefit of human tuition, in matters respect-
 ing this fundamental article.
- 3d. Amplify on the principles of pure religi-
 on in regard of their operation and effects.

1st. Of Religion, as to its Author, &c.

All ends containing each its own distinct rules
 or mode of œconomy, boasts of its relative Au-
 thor; but who can vie with the Christian cha-
 racter, or boast of such an Author as that of re-
 vealed religion. The numerosity of religions in
 the world is an argument of great degeneracy,
 and the reigning perversity of men of corrupt

† Col. iii. 10.

‡ Eph. ii. 10. Isa. xliii. 21.

minds. Does there such a thing as religion ex-
 ist? Does religion concern more immediately
 the incorruptible part of man? If so, who so
 proper as HE who first gave entity to all things,
 and who made man more immediately for his
 glory, to prescribe that system of religion suited
 to his moral capacities, and calculated to esta-
 blish that, and which was the original design of
 such an institution? Where the being of a GOD
 is admitted, and the benignity of that Being
 toward the sons of wretchedness is confessed,
 wherein his care of the soul is so strikingly dis-
 play'd, sure I am, there must be felt the most
 ready concession. Does it not appear then, where
 religion is professedly distinguished by such a
 variety of contrary notions, and practised by an
 equal variety of opposite modes, that either is
 not the author of religion, or that the holy scrip-
 tures is not a perfect directory, or that the scrip-
 tures are obsoleted, and the inventions of Synods,
 and imposition of traditional practices, were pro-
 duced with a far better authority? Shocking
 corruption! Who can behold the present com-
 plexion, of what is called the perfection of beauty,
 and not stand aghast at her deformed and un-
 lovely visage! The fottish and the blind may
 be mistaken, yea, they shall not understand; but
 the wise shall understand, § and who so happy

as those who are led to reflect that the great Author of all things, styled the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not nor is weary; unsearchable in wisdom, boundless in power, and ineffably benignant to the needy, || is the grand Author of revealed religion, and the sure foundation of his people's hope.*

The very idea of religion supposes a superiority in the Author of it, and a certain dependent relation subsisting between the Author of religion, and the subject of it: Now what man, or number of men, who if they cannot redeem a brother, or give to God a ransom for him,† is adequate to give, or is authorized to establish a code of religious laws? If we are instructed in matters of civil deportment, to submit to rule, and be ready to every good work; on the same principle it is evidently, both duty and privilege in a higher respect, to call no man father on earth;§ but to cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, as a being of no account, in matters of soul importance.‡ Am I, or is any man to be judged by man's judgment? Or will the fates of immortality depend upon human decision? If not, who is man? and whence his authority? Let daring worms stand by then, and their un-

|| Isa. xl. 21. ult.

* Jer. xiv. 8.

† Psal. xlix. 7.

§ Matt. xxiii. 9.

‡ Isa. ii. 22.

warrantable yokes fail their jurisdiction, before men of enlarged souls, who are well assured that there is a GOD in Israel.† The world of nature demonstrate one eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient, superintendent, ever-living, immutable, and everlasting GOD! If this ineffable Being is the Author of all things, must he not be the Author of Religion? For which is greater, that which is corruptible, or that which is incorruptible? The world passeth away, but he that doeth the will of GOD abideth forever.‡ How vast the disparity expressed in this important interrogation!* If a man gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, what is he profited? Were it possible for him to make such a bargain, what would the account amount to? He would lose all, and gain nothing! And is GOD the author of the universe, which is subject to perishing, and is he not the author of pure, incorruptible religion? All things are to subserve the purposes of religion; but religion is not subservient to any created, perishing thing. Therefore, if there be a GOD, and GOD be the author of any thing, he must be the author of religion, as it most nearly concerns him, and is most worthy of him.

Being assured of this undoubted fact, that the Eternal Eloim, who by his almighty fiat gave

† 1 Kings xviii. 36.

‡ 1 John ii. 17.

* Mat. xvi. 26.

existence to the universe, is the alone author and origin of religion; let us now enquire secondly, into the nature of this religion.

Of all writings, that of the Bible only is distinguished by the epithet *holy*, as expressive of its quality; and in my text it is termed *pure*. (This is no mean argument for the author of it) had it been the fruits of men's device, it had not been holy nor pure; as it has GOD for its author, it is impossible it should be otherwise. If he, whose name stands prefixed to the holy scriptures, be himself a pure and holy Being, it is impossible, but his religion must be a most pure thing. This blessed book of GOD accounts to us, that GOD is a most pure essence; and that absolute holiness is entirely his own: before whom the heavens are not clean, and the very angels are chargeable with folly. § Every reverse of holiness is so much the reverse of his nature, that his eyes cannot behold it. † And such is his abhorrence of it, that his wrath is awfully declared against it. † The law which was given to the first of the human species, was a true specimen of religion; and while it discovered the authority of Jehovah over his creatures, it also declared his purity and goodness; nor less is it display'd in its requirements of integrity and fidelity in the subjects of it.—

§ Job iv. 18.—xv. 15.

† Hab. i. 13.

† Rom. i. 18.

The sacred penmen of the holy scriptures holds up the excellency of revealed religion, and exalts it beyond every thing beside, for the invaluable property of it. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it, says David. ||— And Paul declares the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good.* As religion is pure in regard of its Author, and pre-script, so it must be touching the design of it.— What could be more worthy of GOD, than that which was so much himself: and at the same time, what greater goodness, or more exalted dignity could be vouchsafed to the creature man? What an astonishing device, to establish an everlasting consanguinity with men! Nor is that religion worth a name that fails of such an end; for sure we are, that if GOD proposes such an end, it is impossible for it to fail. He hath spoken it, and he will bring it to pass; he hath purposed it, he will also do it.† The law of the Lord being an undefiled law, it converteth the soul.‡ As religion then, is in itself a pure uncompounded thing, it can be no more than one. As there is but one GOD, who condescends to prescribe a pure system of truth, to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path, all religions beside must be treated as spurious; for God can-

|| Psal cxix. 140.

* Rom. vii. 12.

† Isa. xlii. 11.

‡ Psal. xix. 7.

not deny himself, which must be the case, if a plurality of religions, different in their maxims and tendencies, originated from the same Author; and far more safe it would be to resist that religion, as the very imp of Satan, that degenerated from the original standard of Bible orthodoxy, than to give it place for a moment.

But I would remark thirdly, on the propriety of this religion, in respect of mankind. When the great Architect had completed the wonders of creation, He gave man to have the sole dominion of his creatures; a greater act of munificence than this could not be bestowed, in regard of kind. But soon a more elevated station, and grander preferment is appointed him; he is placed in his seat of Paradise, prepared of God, and stored with every desirable accommodation for his happiness, as a man: but what is more, and without which every other boon would prove incompleat to an intelligent spirit, and for which he is promoted to this select, and highly honoured residence, he is taught the religion of God. Among all the felicities of this perfect state, the reverse fates of this vast favourite, depended on his attention to that heaven-revealed instruction, in the different qualities of the tree of life, and that of the knowledge of good and evil. § These were doubtless striking emblems,

of either lasting tranquility, or irreparable woe. But this is notorious, that whether man held his integrity and kept his seat, or fell by base transgression, the law of GOD and religion has received no damage: if man is fallen, GOD is not: if sin has corrupted the world, the law and religion is as impeccable as ever. But the propriety of religion in respect of man argues his superior capacities to any other created being in this lower world, of whom Elihu speaks truly. || He teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven, and there is a spirit in man, the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. If man is capable of religion, he is capable of those sublime enjoyments which result from it, which proves him to be a creature distinguished of God for the noblest purposes. But on the other hand, if man have capacities of knowing and loving GOD, and enjoying the blifs of pure religion; he has also capacities for suffering the proportional consequences where pure religion is absent. If this were not the case, it would afford a kind of consolation to the irreligious man, that his capacities were destroyed, and his end would be to perish with the brute. Such an idea, directly tends to frustrate GOD's declaration of a judgement to come, and annihilates his justice,

|| Job xxxv. 11.—xxxij. 8.

which cannot be. Man's capacities do no less exist as to their being now, than the very day he was formed; but as to that orderly and pure state in the which he was first formed, they may be said indeed, not only to be impaired, but to be destroyed, and which I shall prove scripturally under the second head. Was any to assert the destruction of the faculties of the soul by sin, they must consequently assert the destruction of the soul itself, which would be nothing less than to confound the whole system of religion, and to say on the other hand, that the faculties of the soul as to their quality, was not injured and ruined by sin, it is as good as saying, GOD is not truth; the Bible is no revealed system of religion; Christ is no divine person, and his atonement an unnecessary thing. If man in his primitive state was only capable of religion, when his capacities failed, religion became extinct with his faculties, and could be no longer obligatory: which if this were the case, what an unmeaning thing is religion, and what a poor, neglected, unimportant being were man! But religion and pure religion there is; and such as is proper to man as an intelligent and immortal creature. Religion suited to his capacities, and calculated to instruct, refine, and console his immortal faculties, and to render him perfectly meet for the bliss of divine vision, But the im-
 portant

portant defect of man, touching pure religion, is too apparent to be denied. If religion be an amiable thing, as it surely must, if the Author be divine, and it tends to such a noble elevation of man; man's unloveliness and indocility argues him to be unfriendly to himself, in his indifference to the purest and most honourable interest. To cure the portentous evil, to entertain and irradiate the moral powers of man, how necessary as we proposed secondly to consider, is the special revelation for the benefit of human tuition, in matters respecting this fundamental article, (pure religion.) The holy scriptures is the fund of inexhaustible treasures, and are able to make wise unto salvation* every disciple of the lowly Jesus. This sacred system instructs us into the fall, recovery and happy establishment of man; and exemplifies the mysterious and incomprehensible love of GOD.

1st. The fall of man is a scripture doctrine, to which all distinctions among men, whether professor or profane, must accede. The whole complexion of nature bears testimony to the truth of the scripture in this article. GOD made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.† Inventions, awfully destructive to the human race! and as is legibly depicted in this emphatic sentence before the flood,

* 2 Tim. iii. 15.

† Eccle. vii. 29.

which

which declared, the wickedness of man great in the earth, and that every imagination of his heart was only evil continually.

The seasonable exhibition of danger, and solemn caution to avert the snare, proved an ineffectual barrier at the first: it prevented not the violation of so easy a mandate, nor proved sufficient to counteract the bold presuming principle of unexperienced pride. The introduction of sin into the world, was the introduction of all misery. On this achievement of the fallen spirit, commenced the tyrant's triumphs. The seat of purity and peace became infested and disturbed by legions of unnatural foes. Innocence and pleasure now were fled; and dread calamity, vexation, and death were unavoidable associates. Man, so highly distinguished and honoured of his Maker, soon throws off allegiance, and joins the rebel host! He succeeds in the impure art, and propagates *sin* with his species. Man proves a transgressor from the womb, nor better could be produced from the vitiated spring. The corruption of nature is epidemic, without a single exception. The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. § The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is

§ Ezek. xviii. 2.—Psal. lviii. 3.

soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores.† As such, it is lamented* by all who feel it. Behold, says David, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Paul avers that *sin* dwelt in him, and though he nauseated the evil monster, yet was it his daily burden under which he groaned, and from which he wished deliverance. And is the human constitution better or holier now? In no wise! nor is it possible it should. Can the *Æthiopian* change his skin, or the leopard his spots? if so, then may he do good who is accustomed to do evil. The fall of man declares the absence of all good, and the presence of all evil; nor is it in the power of any man fairly, and† with truth to deny it. Nor is it less proved by that too general prepossession in favour of the good condition of human kind, and the strong imagination of right to felicity in God; rather is it a confirmation of the vanity and deceit of the heart, and answers to the true copy drawn by an inspired pen.‖ The God of this world hath blinded the minds of those that believe not, &c.

There can be no shadow of prospect of attaining true felicity in God, while the mind is estranged from him; and the devil and sin has

† Isa. i. 5, 6.

* Psal. li. 5.—xl. 12.—Rom. vii.

† Jer. xiii. 23.

‖ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

the possession, rule and direction, of soul and body. The devil was the grand defrauder of the rights of man from the beginning, and so he continues. From his long practice in hellish policy, he is skilled in those arts of deception, which proves favourable to his base projects, for the subverting of truth, and the enhancing of his own kingdom. He labours by deep laid machinations, in the most occult and unsuspected methods, to deceive unwearied men: and such is the congruity of human nature, that it is easier won to credit deceit than truth. By the attempted state of man, Satan is invited to sway the empire of the soul; when truth and holiness are resisted. May I not appeal to the consciences of men, to bear witness to this truth? What secret love and delight is there to sin, and sinful associates? What approbation and heart-felt complacency is found frequently in the practice of vice; while the worship of GOD, the principles of pure religion, and the company of the truly pious, are grievous discordant things to the soul? That which is enmity within, will display itself without, in some form or other: if not in open violence, it will in secret displacency, and a general contempt of the subjects and principles of religion. Professors of religion are very numerous; and what less than the death of the righteous, and the bliss of heaven can be the

object

object of their hope? But let it be remembered, we profess very generally to believe in the communion of saints; and can that be sincerely believed and wished for in heaven that proves to be so much despised on earth? Professors much differ in their complexion now, but there will be no difference between the truly religious in heaven. As there is but one seat of bliss, so there will be but one society of holy souls, forming one august assembly.

Will any man, of reason only, upon the supposition of the holiness and justice of GOD, and the pollution and demerit of sin, point out the grounds of his hope of endless felicity? It is impossible to discover a basis sufficient, separate from the holy scriptures; nor there, while his reason is his GOD. Sin is the bane of holiness; therefore, that which makes man miserable cannot make him happy. GOD and Satan, holiness and sin, are at as great a variance now as ever: nor will the difference ever be reconciled.—GOD hath decreed an irreversibile enmity to subsist between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent.* GOD has been declaring his anger against sin, and revealing his wrath against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, by various calamities and judgements, all which are but the beginning of sorrows to the

* Gen. iii. 15.

wicked.† Do not all declare the criminality of man, whose sin provoke his wrath, and loud demand his vengeance! And though his patience long forbears, and his goodness mixes mercies with his judgements, yet time will stop the source of the one, and eternity will give full scope to the other. The triumphs of the wicked is but short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. What then will ensue this momentary respite, but the deluge of fire, and the long suspended vengeance of an omnipotent God! He whose word is truth, will not forbear his threatened wrath! Vengeance is mine, He says, I will repay it. And the wicked are reserved to the day of judgement to be punished.‡ Thus the doctrine of the fall, implies the corruption of nature, the state of guilt, and the liability of the delinquent to suffering consequences. One thing more is obvious from this important article, viz. human impotence. Sin* is that disease, which hath impoverished the universe, and beggared every soul. Nevertheless, a fond, though false conceit, prevails in most, that nature will find some expedient in an hour of extremity: and that in the exertion of a supposed, and an untried ability, it shall be able to soften, if not subdue an obstinate evil. But that this is an

† Psal. vii. 11.—Rom. i. 18.—Matt. xxiv. 8.—Job xiii. 9.

‡ 2 Pet. ii. 9.—Rom. xii. 10.

awful delusion is plain ! Man's natural wisdom is declared folly, and his strength weakness, & therefore can be of no avail.

There can be no sufficiency in a poor impotent sinner, either to defend, or extricate himself against devouring wrath ! If so, would he not prove it in any petty disaster ? Would he so frequently be the tame subject of personal or relative affliction ? Nay, he is as necessarily a sufferer as he is a sinner ; and the nature of sin and suffering are equally unavoidable. If then a light affliction, or a common casualty cannot be averted, how will our potency cope with the King of Terrors ! endure the horrors of the judgement-day ! and grapple with the vengeance of eternal fire ! Nor can human potency the cause remove—Man is fallen, degenerate, destroyed.* He cannot rise, he cannot restore ; and what seems still more awful, he has no more of will than power ! Man has no will to be happy ! No, not to be divinely blest. True happiness is true holiness, the one infers the other ; and does man will holiness ? What, the carnal mind which is enmity against God ? Impossible. Rather he would holiness did not exist ! Though vain man would be wise, and form a phantom of his own to boast, he cannot prove free-will in matters of religion, to exist

† 1 Cor. i. and ii. chap.

* Rev. vi. 17. Hosea. xlii. 9.

in any of all the unregenerate tribes of Adam. Man, altogether filthy! Who the reverse will prove! and all men under sin the scripture doth conclude. § Nor will any dare deny this, without detecting his own blindness and hypocrisy. † Thus, poor sinful, impotent man, is reduced and brought down to the last degree of baseness and servitude; and now, what remains to accomplish his woes in the regions of despair with damned fiends! No more on his side need be done. The momentary suspense, or the reverse of fates, hang on the sovereign nod! Let him but say, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversary; or deliver him from going down to the pit;" the sentence returns not void, his doom is fixed for death or bliss! But bliss, to criminals so base, no justice can allow, without a blot on heaven! This had been true, but for the rich invention of a God! The last extremity is God's opportunity! and here, Wisdom erects her standard, and in eternal harmony unites the discordant attributes, and magnifies rich, sovereign grace, in man's eternal weal.

Here we are led into a new scene, which cannot fail of producing accents of joy and gladness, that the bones which sin has broken may rejoice; ‡ and this will appear secondly in the scripture revelation touching man's recovery.

§ Gal. iii. 22.

† Prov. xxviii. 13.

‡ Psal. li. 8.

In notifying man's recovery, we shall remark on GOD's œconomy, according to the instructions of his word. The actual recovery of lost sinners bespeak the infinite mercy of GOD,* and which is gloriously demonstrated in the doctrine of divine atonement. Is sin the transgression of the law of GOD? Is the will less than infinite? It is objectively so, upon which there must necessarily follow infinite displeasure; and this infinite displeasure must fall on the head of the delinquent. Nor is it less than an infinite evil personally done against ourselves, for although human capacities will not admit of infinite sufferings respecting their quantity, yet they will so in respect of their durability, on the supposition of the soul's immortality. On this grant, if any are delivered from this infinite evil, it is effected by an infinite satisfaction, provided and accepted as a compensation for the demerit by which this infinite evil is justly incurred.

This infinite satisfaction is exemplified in the person of GOD's eternal Son, wherein the boundless and unfathomable love of Jehovah is strikingly displayed! It is no superficial, unimportant narration, that the holy gospel sounds in the ears of mortals, concerning his great love!† Nor could the greatness of the love of GOD so declared, by the most lofty expressions that can

* Titus iii. 5.—Eph. ii. 4. † John iii. 16.—Rom. viii. 32.

be formed, be proper to any being but GOD's own beloved Son. Nor could the grand design, worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness to invent, be accomplished, but in such a glorious personage as the Son of GOD. It is humbly presumed then, that the Father well knew the dignity and responsibility of his dear Son, who in the eternal council was set up the Mediator of his People, and so early promised to the first transgressor, by the phrase of the seed of the woman. †

A rejection of the deity of the Son of GOD must be the basest reflection on the council of GOD, that the mutilated reason of man is capable of. How strange to account upon such an hypothesis for that endearment and complacency subsisting in eternity between the Father and Son.* What satisfaction could possibly be derived from any mere man to the eternal Father? What virtual performances or meritorious sufferings, were appeasing of wrath, or procuring of bliss? Or wherein do the great love of GOD shine out to the guilty sons of men, in giving one of this fallen species for their ransom? Or if not a ransomer, the scriptures are insignificant, and the prospects of immortal bliss are entirely and forever obstructed. How ridiculous is the great love of GOD represented by those who are strangers to the grace of GOD, who in-

† Gen. iii. 15.

* Prov. viii. 30, 31.

God's
 design,
 invent,
 perso-
 fumed
 ty and
 eternal
 people,
 gressor,
 †
 God
 ncil of
 s capa-
 ch an
 acency
 er and
 be de-
 ather?
 us suf-
 curing
 God
 giving
 ? Or
 signifi-
 are en-
 culous
 y those
 ho in-

head of honouring the Son as they honour the
 Father, in denying the one they deny the other
 also; † and in so doing, teach men to despise the
 way of salvation, and make their own damnation
 sure! How unimportant upon such an idea,
 are the promises of God, when their accom-
 plishments are viewed as terminating in a mere
 man! or what safety in a poor sinner's hoping
 for the divine clemency! To trust in an abso-
 lute God, were venturing on consuming fire:
 to trust in the Saviour, were to trust in an arm
 of flesh, and to incur the curse. § How enig-
 matical, and miserably intricate were divine
 things; and how distressingly uncertain were
 the state of the purest characters among men, if
 Christ be not the saviour and refuge of poor
 sinners!

Were it possible for me to admit of any
 thought like it, I should be ready to presume
 on an amendment. Perceiving the case of a
 son required and asked for bread, I should be
 shocked with the awful disappointment, from
 the steely heart of a father, which would afford
 nothing better than a stone. || Most God-dis-
 honouring doctrine! But the true Christian
 has not so learned Christ. He who is the Gift
 of the Father is the fruit and effect of boundless,

† John v. 23.---I John ii. 23. § Heb. xii. 29.---Jer. xvii. 5.

|| Luke xi. 11. ■

everlasting love! The coequal and coeval Son, the second person of the ever-adorable Trinity, by whom the worlds and all things were created, and without whom nothing was made.* He in whom we live, move, and have our being; who is over all, GOD blessed for ever.† He is viewed as the true Messiah, the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King of his Redeemed; from whence he appears an object to be greatly desired by all nations.‡

But were he not GOD, what great love could himself evince to us, that should require our admiration? Could ever any mere man by his great love confer on any an immortal benefit? And what monstrous idolatry must his Disciples be guilty of, in their high ascriptions of love to him, if he were not GOD? Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.¶ For the redemption of sinners he gave himself, and which boundless favour, is ever viewed by the Church with sensible emotions of wonder and delight!

The Apostle must intend surely, when he helps the recollection of the Church at Corinth,‡ to lead them to an object calculated to afford

* John i.---Heb. i.---Psal. xlv. † Acts xvii. 28. ‡ Hag. ii. 7.

¶ Rev. i. 5, 6.---Titus ii. 4.---Gal. ii. 20. ‡ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

them infinite delight. Ye know, he says, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.— When was he rich, if only a poor man? If any thing less than GOD, what could avail his riches for the myriads of elect vessels?

What an exhibition of the personal dignity, and infinite condescension of Jesus, is held forth to the church of Philippi!† He being in the form of GOD, and thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD: but made himself of no reputation, &c. Truly, this is too illustrious to need a comment, and must render every base mutilator of the sacred text, highly culpable. That bare-faced and abominable divinity of Arius, propagated by the fraternity of him, who hath long since transformed himself into an angel of light, and which is far more formidable and destructive than Judaism, or Popery, can never enough be exploded and hated. The holy writings fail not their salutary warnings against antichrist and antisciptural divinity, by whom the church of GOD have ever more or less been infested.‡ There were says the Apostle Peter, false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you: Well, and how shall we know them? Why, they shall

† Phil. ii.

§ 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2.—1 John ii. 22.

privily bring in (like their father for cunning) damnable doctrines, or heresies; and what is the sum of those heresies? Why, shocking to relate! even denying the Lord that bought them. What do the Apostle John say of them? He joins them with the same fraternity. Who is a liar (he says) but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Once more, how well were the Apostles employed in making such a mighty stir through the world, in crying up and propagating the virtues and imitable manners of a good man! Why had they not each one set himself the original of his respective community? Would it not have been as well? Not so! they despise the idea! but all with joint harmony as with one mouth declare, on the side of an higher object. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.* And that blessed ambassador Paul, magnified his office as a preacher of Jesus, and could never enough extol his free-grace-salvation. Hear him proclaiming through the Gentile coasts, unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!† How empty the sound, to proclaim the unsearchable riches of a mere man! but it must be privily done, or their

* 2 Cor. 4. 5.

† Eph. iii. 8.

glaring absurdity would meet with a public, and an immediate detection. How deservedly are the first propagators of such unimportant tenets branded for the most egregious fools, and the very apes of hell, to whom they are beholden for such an accomplished mockery! Again, how eminently do the Arian fraternity reflect on the Majesty of heaven, (as well as his low ambassadors in preaching the anointed Saviour as the Lord of life and glory) when he exhibits and commends his love, and the love of his coequal Son, as the most unparalleled instance of good will and benevolence to the sons of wretchedness, as though all other displays of heaven's philanthropy were inconsiderable, and below a name when with this compared. This love is an edition of all editions, which beggars all language in the attempt of an explanation. It is emphatically styled *God's great love*, and which swallows up, and obliterates every other shade. It is rated by a comparison than which nothing can exceed: According to *his* mercy he saved us, &c.† *GOD so loved*, says the scriptures—let an angel if he can explain, with what kind of love, to what rate, and to what endless end he loved the Church when he gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Let the empty sound of human goodness, without the grace of heaven, content the dying crowds of Arius: sure I am, no converts can be made without the sovereign arm of Him who all things holds; and with whom nothing is impossible. It is worthy of Jehovah's hand to minister this grace. GOD commendeth his love towards us, in this best respect, that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* In the dignity of the Person of the Son of GOD, is laid the foundation of divine satisfaction, and whence all human hope of happiness arise. If Christ were less than God, his sacrifice deserved not a thought, for no satisfaction is made; religion's all a farce, and we are all deceived.—But known it is, that the record which GOD hath given of his Son is true, affording no less a testimony than eternal life to all believers.†—Hence the believer, o'er a dying son of Arius, exults in living facts! We have not followed cunningly devised fables.§ This ineffable Person of the Son, according to divine revelation, was set up from everlasting, as the Head and Mediator of his People: ‡ who was revealed in the promises to the Patriarchs and Prophets; and represented by typical persons and things, chiefly to the chosen of GOD, the Jews, till the

* Rom. v. 8.

† 1 John v. 10, 11.

§ 2 Peter i. 16.

‡ Prov. viii.

time came when he should be manifested in the flesh, as Paul actually declares.* In which extraordinary, astonishing, and supernatural act of God, the divine prophecies and promises had their accomplishments. This was the body prepared by infinite wisdom, and the immediate work of Omnipotent goodness. § This body animated by a pure soul, was proper to the eternal Son. In him dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily, † who in the fulness of time was sent forth, made under the law. The law bound him to obedience, and to which he was every way adequate, for the law was within his heart, and his meat and drink it was to perform all its requirements. ‡ In all the labours of his life, he derived an infinite virtue to the human nature, dignified, and exalted it above all estimation. The restoration of the sons of God, how far beyond the highest felicitating honours of Adam the first! Were ever angels so caressed! He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham! || Who sustains so near a relation to the Son of God! The magnified Church of the living God is the body, to whom Christ, the ever-living and exalted head, is become all things. §§ His life, and all his acts are imputative, by virtue whereof, all his members

* Gal. iv. 4. § Isa. vii. 14. --- Matt. i. 20. † Col. ii. 9.

‡ Psal. xl.

|| Hab. ii. 16.

§§ Col. i. 18.

writ in the volume of the eternal book, stand honourably clear.* Their debt of sin, under which they came, through the apostacy of the first Adam, was fully paid by this great Surety, when he actually made his soul an offering for sin, bare the transgression of his people, and on the cross expired; with this soul-transporting, and immortally-animating sound, it is finished!† Now is come salvation! for he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to life through the gospel. Herein is constituted the satisfaction of GOD, and the eternal consolation of his Israel. The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness-sake, he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable. Sin, death, hell, and devil are subdued; they are brought under everlasting bonds, and Jesus is the eternal conqueror! nor shall they ever more renew their triumphs over a single-soul redeemed. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and before the eternal throne they hymn his conquering love.‡ Thus by scripture authority, and by the grace of GOD, we preach a finish'd salvation by Christ. Christ's living labours, and Christ's dying strife, according to the scriptures, is the true saints avail. Nor this alone: Christ arose again, according to the scriptures,§ and is at the

* Psal. cxxxix. 16.

† Isa. liii.—Matt. xxvii. 50.

‡ Rev. xii. 11. and chap. v.

§ Psal. lxviii.—1 Cor. xv.

right hand of Majesty in the heavens, to possess mansions for his redeemed, according to the scriptures.* Is this bible declaration of the fall of man a credible doctrine? To such, the true scriptural account of man's recovery by the God man Mediator, must be truly acceptable.

I would lastly note on this head, the happy establishment of redeemed souls, according to the scripture. Do the scriptures direct to so interesting an object? And can believers waver with confirming proofs of divinity before their eyes? Let us briefly note their contents. And here permit me to direct your views toward God's œconomy, for salvation security. No fleshly forms, no human projects, that imports creature sufficiency, do the sacred oracle propound; but strongly attests the simple, certain mode, first planned in the eternal mind, and ratified in heaven. The soul-confirming object is held forth under the notion of a covenant: A covenant well-ordered in all things, and sure.|| A covenant, devised and established, ere time began; the fruit of the divine council, constituted by its parties, between whom the certain stipulations, respecting both conditions, and promises, were unalterably fixed. This is that word said to be settled in heaven for ever.†—

* John xiv.—Acts ii. 33. || 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

† Psal. cxix. 89.—Isa. lv. 3.—Psal. lxxxix.

And is so frequently mentioned in the volume of truth by the everlasting covenant. To this covenant transaction there are witnesses: and surely better cannot be obtained. There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.* Amazing grace! neither angels, nor men are meet, or worthy here: the business too sublime, for creatures of highest birth, and immaculate purity. What work with this can vie! worthy the triune God—and how far beyond dispute or thought, is glory ascertained to all the destined sons of heaven. Jehovah lives, a witness to his work; nor less his arm shall rule, his wonders to perform! Nor does he forget the needy, incredulous sons of men below: heaven is furnished well with witnesses; and earth no less! There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three are one. These duly attest the existence of such a covenant, the reality of the revealed system, and the love and faithfulness of the unchangeable God, to every gospel believer.

The happiness herein ascertained, consists in free and full forgiveness of sins. The declaration of Jehovah to his church under the names of Jacob and Israel run thus,† Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my ser-

* 1 John v. 7, 8. † Isa. xliv. 21, 22, --- Jer. xxxi. 33, 34-

servant; I have formed thee, thou art my servant :
 O Israel thou shalt not be forgotten of me : I
 have blotted out as a thick cloud thy trans-
 gressions, and as a cloud thy sins : return unto
 me for I have redeemed thee.

2nd. Another certain felicity of the gospel is
 the declaration of the state of adoption, and the
 given witness of the Spirit. Behold, what man-
 ner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,
 that we should be called the sons of GOD.†—
 Because ye are sons GOD hath sent forth the
 spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba
 Father--Ye have received the spirit of adoption,
 whereby we cry Abba Father. The spirit itself
 beareth witness with our spirits that we are the
 children of GOD ; and he that believeth in hath
 the witness in himself.

I would add once more, 3dly, That justifi-
 cation and the final perseverance of the saints,
 are doctrines according to the scriptures, and
 are calculated to promote the happy establish-
 ment of believers.‡ Whom he justified, them
 he also glorified. In these two words justified
 and glorified, (I humbly conceive) is comprised
 the whole designation of GOD towards his
 Church, in all possible description of space.—
 The plan of justification was an eternal device,

† 1 John iii. 1.---v. 10.---Gal. iv. 6.---Rom. viii. 15, 16.

‡ Rom. viii. 30.

and when that council was held between the divine persons, stiled the counsel of peace, § then was justification declared to the great Surety and Representative, as properly pertaining to his seed. The calling mentioned prior to justification, in no case annuls eternal justification, forasmuch as the circumstances of the redeemed, require their being called out from nature state, in order to the enjoyment of that grace, which was decreed to them from all eternity; and in which they cannot otherwise be personally happy, but in the knowledge of such an undeserved favour, conferred as a free gift of grace. From the period of justification manifested, or from effectual calling, sanctification work commences, and is inferred, though not mentioned, between justification and glorification; and indicates the certainty of the thing. That as justification was from GOD's eternity, so sanctification in holiness being proper to the immaculate bliss of heaven, and a glorified state, is ascertained.—How pleasing and delightful to the believer must be such ideas. In this interval between a believer's calling, to his glorification, he is called to combat with the combined armies of earth and hell; and be it so; for what had Satan, or the world to boast? they never maimed the body mystic yet. Of all the Father's gifts

not one is lost.* If the judgements of God are in the earth; yea, if awful desolations swallow up the wicked, yet is the believer safe. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee,† He shall give his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up. Though the world be deluged, his servants shall be safe: Nor waters drown, nor fire shall burn, nor harm the favourites of heaven.‡ I will be with him in trouble saith GOD.§ When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. They shall never perish saith their guardian, and shepherd, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands.|| Thus we prove the happy establishment of redeemed souls. And who are they? They are also distinguished by the scriptures of truth. They are called the election of grace.†† As there were among the Israelites vessels of grace, so there are among all people, kindreds, nations, and tongues.§§ These shall sing with a loud voice, salvation to our GOD that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Elect, according to the fore-knowledge of God

* John xvii. 12. † Psal. xci. ‡ Gen. vii.—Dan. iii. /

§ Isa. xliii. || John x. †† Rom. xi. 5.

§§ Rev. vii. 9, 10.—1 Pet. i. 2.

the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.— How necessary proves the revelation of the holy scriptures, for the benefit of human tuition, in matters respecting the important article of religion. But for this blessed Sun in the firmament of the Church; we had been at a loss to account for the ordinary things of creation, and providence; and in matters of worship, we had with the Athenians, paid our blind devotions to the unknown God.† What a blindness and condescension, hath God vouchsafed in so merciful a distinction to his Church. He hath bestowed on us the lively oracles; composed of his rich goodness, wherein is the copy of his eternal mind delineated. The utility, and animating sweetness found in these records, by all that duly meditate therein, prove them to be divine, and with happy assurance they also assert, All scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works.§ Having thus premised on the two general heads of my subject, I shall on the third and last proposition treat more briefly.— Herein I proposed to amplify on the principles of pure religion, in regard of their operation and

† Acts xvii. 23.

§ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

effects. This is stiled a gospel land; and the present a golden age for Christianity! but what Barbarian would ever suppose, that a land so immersed in sin as this is, had the least acquaintance with the first rudiments of religion! The best of privileges argues not the safest and happiest circumstances. The miracles and doctrines of our Lord, seemed to be chiefly broached at Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum; but against whom were these more dreadful woes denounced! * Religion I fear, is a different thing in reality, to that which the general part of this land imagines. Pure and undefiled religion before GOD, is internally wrought in the soul of man by the spirit of the living GOD. Its office work is to open the blinded mind, to enlighten and inform the judgement, § and to discover the real state of the heart before GOD.— This is called the holy anointing—The effect of such an operation is a painful sensibility of soul; for it is now disposed to serious reflection, and the views of sin in a broken law, occasions sorrow of heart and brokenness of spirit. This state is consonant with the true penitents described by Paul, in the Church at Corinth. †— Their sorrow is stiled a godly sorrow, working repentance which needeth not to be repented of. The genuineness of this repentance is proved by

* Matt. xi. 21.

§ John xvi. 8.

† 2 Cor. vii. 10.

a departure from sin, and the forsaking of sinful companions.

Another work proper to the spirit is the leading of the soul to Jesus; believing in his atonement, and relying on the authority of his word, and the all-sufficiency of his grace; he waits on him in his ordinances, and proves the truth of his salvation. Now it is that GOD commanding the light to shine out of darkness, shineth into his heart, giving him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* The Holy Spirit taketh of the things of Jesus, and sheweth them with fullest demonstration, and beareth them evidently, and persuasively, to the heart or spirit of the believer; and is called by the great Apostle,† the sealing of the holy spirit of promise. In this work of effectual calling, and the revealing of the Son of GOD in the heart,§ wherein is made known the rich grace of forgiveness, there is the constraining love of Christ, on the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given.|| As the property of this grace thus operates in a way of convincing, drawing, persuading, and leading into the rest of Jesus; so it excites holy joy and gratitude; and nobly disposes in every possible way, to celebrate the honours of so worthy a Benefactor.

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Eph. i. 13. § Gal. i. 15, 16.

|| 2 Cor. v. 14.—Rom. v. 5.—xi.

The effects of this grace are truly apparent in the happy subjects of it, not only in respect of their deliverance from a profane world and its practices, but in their holy fear of GOD, evidenced in their walking in all the commandments and ordinances of GOD; added to that of a blameless behaviour before man. The liberty of the sons of GOD is truly exemplified in such characters by their intercourse with heaven: They draw nigh to GOD in his ordinances; he draws nigh to them in grace, and refreshes, and mightily strengthens their souls. The effects of this grace are also evidenced in the tender sensibilities they feel for the best of interests. The Church of GOD takes sweet counsel together, and are frequently divining hopeful methods at least, for the enlarging and strengthening of the best of interests. They love Zion, and pray for the return of her captive state.

The effects of grace are known likewise in a true sympathy of soul for saints and sinners in distress. The orphan and the widow's case is truly felt, nor is it a bare and fruitless commiseration. The new disposition, and prevailing temper of the Christian is to do good, and communicate, knowing that with such sacrifices the Lord is well pleased. The cottages of the poor, and the languishing beds of the afflicted are attended, where counsel and prayer are administered

stered in the name of the Lord. In a word, they are ready to do good unto all men, as much as lieth in them; though especially to the household of faith! Thus true religion originates in GOD; is revealed externally in the scriptures of truth; is internally wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost; and is productive of the pure fruits of righteousness by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of GOD. Amen.



Errata. FINIS.

Pag. 3^d. For over, read ever.
 4. For endo, read systems.
 21. for will, read evil.
 30. for life, read light.
 36. for a blindness, read benignity.
 37. for these read there.
 38. for on, read on.